ABSTRACT

The initial conceptual work involves defining religious violence where on the one hand are various forms of violence as the central concept and its semantics in the cultural perspectives through its various manifestations via agents – direct physical/psychological violence, via institutions – institutional violence and then via structures – structural violence along with such overlapping forms – against people/objects, legal/illegal, legitimate/illegitimate, open/concealed, progressive/reactionary etc. is bracketed between the abstract violence in the form of its metaphorical usage and the ritualised violence, and on the other hand is religion which itself eludes clear-cut definition and operates through creating collective identities – of “us” and of “other(s)”. The concepts of sacrifice, circumcision, holy-war, crusades, Jihad, Dharma-yudh, traditionalism, fundamentalism, communalism, terrorism, martyrdom and suicide bombers as the varied manifestations of ritual violence, holy wars and ideological convictions further elucidate the concept of religious violence. The factors other than religious may culminate into communal and sectarian strife as the social, the political and the economic factors foment a fertile soil the same. Violence has been attempted to be curtailed through various ways such as direct power confrontation (war), negotiation (bargaining), judicial settlement, arbitration, mediation, conciliation, good offices, humanitarian intervention operations, with active role of the civil society, Gandhian way of Satyagraha but the problem of communication due to lack patience for listening the other make them all inefficient, whereas, the dialogical process involves communication in totality. Therefore, defining the essence of dialogue and the rules for inter-religious dialogue becomes imperative. In the backdrop of the concepts of multiculturalism and pluralism in their historical perspective, the dialogical process among religions initiated at various international platforms emerges as panacea for interreligious violence. The Parliament of World’s Religions 1893 at Chicago and its revival with the formation of Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions culminating into the Parliaments of 1993 at Chicago, 1999 at Cape Town, 2004 at Barcelona and 2009 at Melbourne, the work by some other forums such as the World Congress of Faiths, the Elijah Interfaith Institute, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and bilateral dialogue at micro level along with work being done by the academic fraternity with their achievements and pitfalls become subjects for critical study. But
religious violence is still there. Though dialogue can not substitute praxis, however, interreligious dialogue not only brings a deeper understanding of the “other” in the real human predicament but also makes one more aware the nuances of one’s own. It may not fully solve the problem of religious violence but it enhances mutual understanding so that the “other” instead of a tormentor becomes the suffering “other” – a fellow traveller.